Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

5 October 2026

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Twenty-Third Meeting
Geneva, 30 November–4 December 2026
Item 8 and 12 of the provisional agenda
Informal presentation of requests for extension of deadlines submitted under Article 5 and of the analysis of these requests
Consideration of requests submitted under Article 5

Request for an extension of the deadline for completing the destruction of anti-personnel mines in accordance with article 5 of the convention

Executive Summary

Submitted by Serbia

1. The former State Union of Serbia and Montenegro ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, on 18 September 2003. The Convention entered into force on 1 March 2004. Serbia is fully committed to the implementation of its obligations under the Convention in accordance with Article 60 of the Charter of the State Union.

2. In accordance with Article 5, paragraph 1, of the Convention, Serbia had an obligation to destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines (AP mines) in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control, as soon as possible, but not later than ten years after the entry into force of the Convention, **1 March 2014**.

3. At the Thirteenth Meeting of the States Parties, the Republic of Serbia was granted a five-year extension of the deadline for fulfilment of its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention, which was 1 March 2019. The progress made by Serbia in its implementation during its initial ten-year period for the fulfilment of the Article 5 obligations, 2004-2014, is documented in detail in its first extension request.

4. At the Seventeenth Meeting of the States Parties of the Convention held on 26-30 November 2018, Geneva, the Republic of Serbia was granted an extension of the deadline for fulfilment of its obligations under Article 5 of the Convention, until **1 March 2023**. The progress made during the first extension is documented in detail in Serbia's second extension request.

5. At the Twentieth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention held on 21 to 25 November 2022, the Republic of Serbia was granted the request for a third extension period, until **December 31, 2024**. The progress made during the second extension period for the fulfilment of its Article 5 obligations is documented in detail in its third extension request.

6. At the Fifth Review Conference - the Siem Reap-Angkor Summit on a Mine-Free World - the Republic of Serbia was granted a fourth extension period, until **31 December 2026**. The progress made during the third extension period for the fulfilment of its Article 5 obligations is documented in detail in its third extension request.

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7. At the time of submission of its last request, the remaining challenge totalled 268,100 square metres in the Municipality of Bujanovac with one area suspected to contain anti-personnel mines, plus newly discovered suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) in the Bujanovac Municipality, comprising five 11 SHAs totalling 4,367,643 square metres, which already been designated as a starting point for non-technical survey (NTS) during the previous extension period. The size of the areas suspected to contain anti-personnel mines will be known after the completion of the NTS project

8. Since the previous request, in 2024, one technical survey project by the Serbian Mine Action Centre (SMAC) was implemented, in the Municipality of Bujanovac, releasing an area of 122,200 square metres. In 2025, a NTS team was established, equipped and trained, and commenced its activities. In March 2026, two technical survey projects commenced, which had been prepared in 2025, with tendering procedures completed, contractors selected and funds allocated, but whose implementation had been delayed due to unfavourable weather conditions. At the time of writing, a total of 268,100 square metres have been released. The funds for all projects were provided by the Serbian Government from national funds, which were matched, through ITF Enhancing Human Security (ITF), by donations from the United States and the Republic of Korea.

9. During the extension period there were a number of circumstances that have impeded Serbia from being in a position to declare completion by its upcoming deadline, including:

(a) **Unregistered mined areas:** Residual mined areas in Serbia are not systematically recorded and were not laid according to standard military patterns, often consisting of nuisance mines without reliable historical documentation. This lack of predictable layouts complicates survey efforts and increases reliance on NTS, while initial assessments are frequently subject to revision as new evidence emerges. This uncertainty directly impacts planning accuracy, timelines, and resource allocation.

(b) **Closed communities:** many of the communities are traditionally very closed, and information was not openly available in the past. Building confidence required time and sustained presence in the field, and the fact that the NTS team members originate from these communities has further supported the development of rapport and improved information flow.

(c) **Newly identified SHAs:** New SHAs were identified in the Municipality of Bujanovac in October 2019 and August 2021 during forest fires. Reliable data on the extent and characteristics of contamination were not available at the time, necessitating additional NTS efforts prior to technical survey or clearance activities. Additional areas were identified in 2025 through the work of the newly established NTS team, which built trust with local communities and improved reporting of explosive hazards.

(d) **Contamination other than mines:** Residents frequently report various types of explosive remnants of war (ERW), including from past conflicts, which are often perceived as anti-personnel mines. The distinction between anti-personnel mines and other explosive hazards is not always clear, requiring explanation, field verification, and careful assessment by the NTS team. While essential for accurate classification and evidence-based planning, this process can influence operational timelines and require adjustments to survey priorities and resource allocation.

(e) **Challenging terrain and accessibility:** Remaining SHAs are predominantly located in hilly and mountainous terrain with dense vegetation and limited infrastructure. Access roads are often unpaved, narrow, or seasonally impassable, delaying the deployment of survey and clearance teams and sometimes requiring additional preparatory work to ensure safe access.

(f) **Climactic conditions:** Adverse weather conditions, particularly during autumn and winter, including heavy rainfall, mud, surface water accumulation, fog, and occasional flooding, significantly limit field operations. These conditions reduce visibility, affect safety, and constrain the effective deployment of personnel and equipment, resulting in periodic operational delays.

(g) **NTS project implementation:** The establishment, training, accreditation, and equipping of a dedicated NTS team for the Municipality of Bujanovac in 2025 was a

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necessary investment to enable a comprehensive and systematic survey process. Prioritising detailed NTS activities allows for precise definition of suspected hazardous area boundaries and the development of targeted, evidence-based technical survey and clearance projects. This approach reduces the risk of overestimating contaminated areas and avoids unnecessary operational costs associated with imprecise historical data.

10. The remaining mine contamination presents a severe socioeconomic impact on communities in the municipality of Bujanovac. This municipality is the most underdeveloped municipality in Serbia. Mined areas affect the safety of people and hinders the livelihood of people including the safe exploitation of woods, development of cattle breeding and mushroom picking, which happen to be the main source of income of locals and in that way. In addition, contamination blocks road communications, environment affected and increase the risk of fire.

11. The Republic of Serbia's achievements regarding the fulfilment of its obligations under Article 5 have been significant so far. Our aim is to fulfil the remaining obligations as soon as possible. At the same time, we are facing a number of challenges. The most important of these include strengthening trust within affected communities, further developing and fully implementing a NTS system in line with International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), as well as establishing an effective Information Management system, including the transition to a comprehensive electronic database. In addition, ensuring adequate and sustainable financial resources remains an important requirement for the continuation and completion of mine action activities. Furthermore, Serbia also has to address contamination by other ERW, which often block development and infrastructural projects. Funding from donors for mine action activities has severely diminished through the years, with donors' preference to provide funds for cluster munitions clearance.

12. The Republic of Serbia is requesting an extension of the deadline for fulfilling of its mine clearance obligations under the Convention for a period of 3-years (31 December 2026-31 December 2029). During the period of the request, Serbia projects that it will need to complete non-technical survey , including the training and accreditation of NTS teams, , analyse all data in order to develop a forward-looking, evidence-based work plan and new technical survey and clearance projects. Serbia will aim to submit by 31 March 2029 a request, if more time is needed for completing its Article 5 obligations. The Republic of Serbia has allocated national funds for each year until 2028, in line with its available resources. In addition, funds for the non-technical survey project have been provided by the Serbian Government from national sources, which were matched, through ITF Enhancing Human Security, by donations from the United States. It is worth mentioning that during the extension period, Serbia will also be addressing clearance of cluster munition and ERW in priority areas.

13. During the three-year extension period Serbia is projecting that it will complete NTS, analyse all data in order to develop a forward-looking work plan, develop technical survey (TS) and clearance projects and ensure the completion of activities to the extent permitted by available resources and working conditions. The aim is to project with greater certainty the number of areas, the size of each area and the amount of time matched with a detail budget that will be required to complete Serbia's Article 5 obligations.

14. Due to the challenging nature of the remaining contamination, SMAC has changed its approach since the last extension request. SMAC's NTS teams will be conducting a *community council* by *community council* NTS of the Municipality of Bujanovac. In this context, the five areas that were identified in the previous extension request as requiring NTS will be addressed through this revised methodology, which entails a comprehensive survey of the entire municipality on a community council-by-community council basis.

15. This approach will identify areas for TS and clearance and additionally remove doubt and confusion from communities where no evidence of contamination has been identified, following the implementation of All Reasonable Effort during the NTS process. These communities will pass over to residual risk management, with the proactive management of EO being targeted to the areas where evidence has been identified. In areas with no evidence, the community council presidents will sign a declaration that there is no evidence of EO following the survey.

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16. Appropriate TS, both targeted and systematic, will be implemented in accordance with field conditions and based on the evidence collected through NTS. The plan is to prioritise rapid, targeted TS to clarify, confirm and further refine the results of the NTS. The outcomes of this process will serve as the basis for planning clearance activities, as well as identifying the need for any additional TS where required.

17. Taking into account the specific situation with contamination in the Municipality of Bujanovac (nuisance mines), this plan is subject to change, so a detailed plan will be created after the NTS. A Detailed Work Plan with clear milestones is included in the request.

18. First areas to begin with NTS activities will be Djordjevac, Končulj and Dobrosin as communities with the largest area for NTS, thus the communities which are potentially the most vulnerable to mines and other unexploded ordnance.

19. Regarding the analysis of the survey results, monthly meetings between the SMAC, the survey teams and external NTS experts will be organized, so that the survey team present the achieved results, based on the planned activities for that month. These meetings will be used for making plans and organizing activities for the next month.

- Development of technical survey and clearance work plan will be done periodically as relevant information is collected on the areas suspected of being contaminated by mines and other explosive remnants of war.

- The final analysis of all performed activities will be performed after the completion of all Explosive Ordnance Rist Education (EORE) and NTS activities.

20. Simultaneously with survey activities, EORE activities have been initiated, and as of the end of March 2026, EORE sessions have been delivered in eight villages in the Municipality of Bujanovac. During survey, EORE and community liaison activities, women, men and children are systematically consulted, ensuring an inclusive and gender-sensitive approach. EORE activities are tailored to the specific needs of affected communities and implemented in cooperation with local authorities and existing community structures, with a strong focus on gender and diversity inclusion. These activities include the development and delivery of targeted risk messages through various materials, such as leaflets, posters, textbooks and public service announcements. Sessions are conducted bilingually, in Serbian and Albanian, and are adapted to local customs, occupational practices, land use patterns, as well as the gender and age structure of the population.

21. In parallel, SMAC is coordinating with the Ministry of Education to initiate EORE sessions in primary schools in the Municipality of Bujanovac, with the aim of raising awareness among children and promoting safe behaviour from an early age. The start of school-based activities has been postponed due to disruptions in the national education system, in order to ensure effective implementation under stable conditions. At the same time, equal access to employment is ensured for qualified women and men in survey and clearance operations.

22. Since 2015, the funds for demining operations have been allocated from the Serbian State Budget and this trend has been continued on an annual basis and we expect the Serbian Government to continue to allocate the funds for demining operations in the future. We are aware that the national funds are not sufficient to completely resolve the mine problem, therefore, at the same time Serbia will endeavour to secure funding for demining operations either by submitting projects to ITF or lobbying foreign donors. The funds from the Serbian State Budget will be provided to support the on-going work of the SMAC – salaries of the staff, running costs (electricity, water, heating), office and consumption material costs, fuel costs, maintenance of vehicles, costs of the SMAC staff insurance – as well as survey and clearance of confirmed hazardous areas and of other ERW, follow-up of project tasks including quality assurance and quality control.

23. In 2026, the Serbian Government allocated approximately 220,000 euros for demining operations. Comparable allocations are planned for 2027 and 2028, while funding for 2029 has not yet been confirmed. We expect the Serbian Government will continue to allocate the funds for demining operations until the fulfilment of the Article 5 obligations. According to some rough estimations, in addition to funds from national budget (660,000+ euros), with an estimated 2,000,000 euros in resource mobilised from international donors will be needed.

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24. If adequate national and international funding is maintained, and subject to risks related to the uncertainty of contamination, community reporting and hazard classification challenges, challenging terrain and accessibility, as well as climatic and seasonal constraints, Serbia intends to complete its Article 5 obligations as soon as possible through the application of land release methodologies, including cancellation and reduction through non-technical and technical survey, as well as clearance through manual and mechanical demining where appropriate.

25. In the territory of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija, there are mined areas, as well as areas contaminated with cluster bombs remaining after the armed conflicts." Pursuant to Resolution 1244 of the United Nations Security Council (Annex II, item 6), it is envisaged that after the withdrawal, an agreed number of the Republic of Serbia personnel, will be allowed to return to perform certain functions, including marking and clearing minefields. As this provision of Annex II has not been implemented, this issue is still within the competence of UNMIK in accordance with Resolution 1244".

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